Dr. BARNARDISTON's

SERMON

Preached before the Honourable the

HOUSE of COMMONS,

ON

Thurſday January 30, 1766.

Veneris, 31 *die Januarii*, 1766.

Ordered,

THAT the Thanks of this Houſe be given to the Reverend Dr. Barnardiſton, *for the Sermon by him preached yeſterday before this Houſe, at St.* Margaret's Weſtminſter; *and that he be deſired to print the ſame*; *and that Mr.* Thomas Townſhend, *and the Lord* Burgherſh, *do acquaint him therewith.*

T. TYRWHITT,
Cl. Dom. Com.

22

A

SERMON

Preached before the Honourable the

HOUSE of COMMONS

AT

St. *Margaret's Weſtminſter*

ON

Thurſday January the 30th, 1766.

BEING

The Day appointed to be obſerved

In Memory of the

Martyrdom of King CHARLES I.

By J. BARNARDISTON, D.D.
Maſter of CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE,
in CAMBRIDGE.

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MDCCLXVI.

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A

SERMON

Preached before the Honourable the

HOUSE of COMMONS.

MATTH. XXII. 21.

—RENDER UNTO CÆSAR THE THINGS WHICH ARE CÆSAR'S.—

THIS reply was made by our Bleſſed Saviour to an inſidious Queſtion propoſed to Him by the Phariſees and Herodians, who, though of two ſects very oppoſite both in principles and practice, yet at this time conſpired together to entangle Him in his talk. The Queſtion

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propoſed was concerning the lawfulneſs of paying tribute to Cæſar; a Queſtion, the determination of which, they thought, muſt neceſſarily reduce Him to great difficulties. If He determined in favour of paying the tribute-money, the Phariſees concluded he muſt then renounce the character of the Meſſiah, who in their carnal opinions muſt be one, who would reſtore the temporal kingdom to Iſrael, and deliver them from every kind of ſubjection to the Roman Government. If on the other hand He determined againſt the payment of it, the Herodians, the favourers of Kingly power and friends of Cæſar, would immediately have declared Him a mover of ſedition, and delivered Him up to the Romans, to be puniſhed as an enemy to the State. But our great Maſter diſappointed the malice of both theſe ſets of men, by teaching them, that the kingdom of the Meſſiah might be maintained conſiſtently with the ſtricteſt diſcharge of every Civil Duty; and that a due

and ready obedience to the legal Magiſtrate was required of all his faithful and true followers.

In the character of the Phariſees may aptly be included that ſet of men, who under a pretence of Religion are movers of ſedition; in that of the Herodians, thoſe, who in attempting to extend beyond due bounds the power of the Sovereign, undermine and overturn the liberty of their Country: both theſe characters are in this reply condemned; and with what wiſdom and juſtice the determination was made, the hiſtory of thoſe times, which we are this Day called together to recollect and lament, will abundantly teſtify.

I would not be underſtood to mean that all thoſe, who were engaged in that long and unnatural war, deſerve to be claſſed under one of theſe Characters. Names certainly may be found on both ſides, that would have done honour to the

beſt of times, though they unhappily were involved in the tranſactions of the worſt. There were friends to the Prerogative of the Crown, who had no bad deſigns on the liberty of the People; and there were friends and aſſertors of the freedom of their country, who were yet willing to render unto Cæſar the things which were Cæſar's.

It was the misfortune of theſe great men to live at a time, when the Prerogative of the Crown and the Privileges of the People had no viſible and acknowledged bounds; at a time, when for near two centuries before, great inroads had been gradually made on the liberties of the People.

Henry the Seventh extended the Prerogative royal under the mask of tenderneſs to his people. The Tyranny of the Barons had been long felt by the Commons. He depreſſed the one, but relieved not the other. The power loſt by the Nobles

was

was an acceſſion to his own: it tended not to the Freedom of his ſubjects, but to increaſe the Prerogative of the Crown. The eyes of the People were blinded by the ſubtilty of the Prince during that reign: and though they ſaw and felt ſome of it's effects during the reign of his ſon and ſucceſſor; yet the haughty and intrepid ſpirit of that Prince ſo overawed and intimidated his ſubjects, that they were incapable of forming any oppoſition to the power he aſſumed.

The Princeſs, that ſucceeded after an interval of two very ſhort reigns, poſſeſſed the ſpirit and ſubtilty of her Anceſtors. The time, in which ſhe aſcended the Throne, was favourable to Her: and the addreſs, with which ſhe managed the opportunity, gained Her the confidence and affection of her ſubjects. Her ſucceſs confirmed that eſteem and reſpect. And though ſhe exerted her prerogative to a degree inconſiſtent with the nature of

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a free Conſtitution; yet ſo great was the luſtre of her reign, and ſo unbounded the affection of her people; that they either dared not or would not inquire into the due limits of her power. By the conduct and abilities of theſe three Princes the royal Prerogative was greatly increaſed; and their ſucceſs in maintaining it to ſo unuſual an extent may be owing in ſome degree to their caution of making any legal claim, and concealing their encroachments under the popular pretence of the greater ſecurity of the people.

The next was a Prince, who, though he had ſagacity enough to diſcern the power his predeceſſors had aſſumed, yet wanted their caution and qualities to preſerve it. His character was too ambiguous to command the confidence of his ſubjects; his pretenſions to their eſteem and reverence were unſupported either by the luſtre of his arms, or the wiſdom of his Councils; and the Privi-

Privileges he claimed as due to the perſon of the King rouſed the jealouſy of the Commons, who were by this time become reſpectable. The more earneſt he was in urging his claim, the more vigilant and vigorous were they to oppoſe it. The Nation in conſequence of this contention became divided into two parties, one of which laboured to extend the prerogative as high as poſſible; the other ſought as powerfully to reduce it: whilſt the one was eager to render to Cæſar more than his due, the other was as backward to pay to Cæſar the things which were Cæſar's.

At this dangerous criſis the Monarch, whoſe unhappy fate we deplore with faſting and prayer, acceded to the Throne; a Prince, whoſe conduct in the duties of private life was ſo juſt and equitable, that we have good reaſon to believe, had he been unbiaſſed by the example, and uninfluenced by the political leſſons of his Father, that his reign

reign might have been as uſeful and happy as any of his Predeceſſors. But unhappily for his own peace, as well as that of his ſubjects, he conſidered the claims his Father had aſſumed as the ſacred rights of the Crown, which he was bound to maintain. The perſons, who ſurrounded the Throne, were through Education or Policy of the ſame ſentiments; and what was moſt alarming to the being of the Conſtitution, even thoſe, who ſat on the ſeat of Juſtice, in whoſe hands were intruſted the property and liberty of their country, dared to make a ſacrifice of their own conſciences, and the rights of their fellow-ſubjects, to the miſtaken judgment of the Prince and the violence of his Miniſters. When the vindication of the rights of the ſubject was thus eluded by thoſe who ſat on the ſeat of judgment, and prevented in Parliament by a long intermiſſion of that court of Legiſlature; all ſubſequent conceſſions were deemed inſufficient to atone for paſt encroachments, a

diſtruſt

diſtruſt and diffidence of the royal word almoſt univerſally prevailed; the mutual animoſities between the King and People increaſed, till all hopes of accommodation vaniſhed, and the ſword of Civil diſcord was at length unſheathed.

And ſurely, ſo long as a redreſs of the grievances the nation groaned under, and the future ſecurity of the Conſtitution, were the object of the war, ſo long was it conſiſtent with equity and juſtice, nor could it oppoſe itſelf to the precept in the Text. It infringed not the legal Prerogative that was inherent in the majeſty of the Crown; it defended only the undoubted Rights and Privileges of a People living under a legal Eſtabliſhment. All the conſequences of the war during that period can with truth be aſcribed only to the pernicious counſels of thoſe men, who conſulted the ſplendor of the Crown more than the happineſs of their maſter, the private advantages of

themſelves, than their duty to the publick and their love of their fellow-countrymen.

But when the People, not content with the redreſs of the grievances they really laboured under, pretended others, which they never felt; when, inſtead of defending only their own Privileges, they invaded the Rights of their Sovereign; when under the pretence of a concern for the intereſt of Religion, they proceeded to Rebellion; and under the diabolical maſk of Juſtice to their Country, they ſlaughtered their Maſter; then were the enemies of the King, the enemies of God and their Country; and to them muſt redound the chief guilt of thoſe times.

It ſhould ſtill be remembered to the honour of many of thoſe Patriots, who firſt ſtood forth in the ſupport of Liberty and the Conſtitution; that long e'er this they had joined the part of their Sovereign,

reign, and were as warm and zealous in the cauſe of oppreſſed Royalty, as they had before been active in the cauſe of Liberty.

THESE events are fruitful of inſtruction, and will afford ample materials for our reflection and profit, if duly applied. For from the experience of the miſeries of this long and unnatural war we may obſerve, how dangerous it is in a legal Eſtabliſhment to extend the Prerogative of the Crown beyond it's due limits. The precepts of our holy Religion indeed are very frequent and very expreſs in requiring a ready obedience and quiet ſubmiſſion to the ſupreme Power. And this duty is enforced under the conſideration that this power is of God; and that conſequently * "Whoſoever reſiſteth the power, reſiſteth the ordinance of God, and they that reſiſt, ſhall receive to themſelves damnation." However care muſt be taken,

* Rom. xiii. 2.

when we apply theſe general rules of Scripture as meaſures of our own duty, to know to what character ſuch an unlimited obedience belongs. Under different forms of Government the object of ſuch obedience will vary, and therefore the manner in which we expreſs our Duty muſt vary alſo.

WHERE the will of the Prince is the law of the Country, an unlimited obedience is due to Him who ſitteth upon the Throne. But where the will of the Prince himſelf is limited by the laws of the Country, our obedience to the Prince is alſo limited, and muſt be regulated by the laws of that Community under which we live. This is a diſtinction very neceſſary to be made, as the calamities, we this day lament, may, in ſome degree, be charged on principles drawn from the miſtaken interpretation of thoſe paſſages of Scripture that relate to our Civil obedience.

WHAT the policy of Courts had invented to extend the power of the Crown, was now ſanctified by the interpretations of the Church; what former Princes had with caution advanced, was now declared to be a divine right; that any oppoſition to the power of the Prince, was an oppoſition to God himſelf, whoſe vicegerents Princes are. Hence the conduct of the Prince was a myſtery highly unbecoming the ſubject to pry into. Every remonſtrance was an Inſult on Majeſty, and every attempt to vindicate the freedom of the Conſtitution was declared Rebellion.

To principles of this ſort muſt be imputed the reſolution of the King againſt making any compliance to the petitions and remonſtrances of his people: And to the experience of the ſubjects, that theſe were the principles of the perſons who were then at the Helm, muſt be imputed alſo the violent meaſures which they uſed in defence of liberty.

But if ſuch principles were admitted without reſtriction to be true, the conſequence muſt be, that only one form of Government could be agreeable to the will of God, and the Idea of a legal Eſtabliſhment muſt vaniſh, which in it's nature reſerves a power to the people to defend their Laws. But however this right of defence may be acknowledged under a legal Government, yet we may learn this important leſſon from the hiſtory of thoſe times, that even in caſes of the greateſt extremity, men ought to proceed with the utmoſt caution and temper; leſt while they are attempting to remedy the evils they really labour under, they ruſh upon others unforeſeen and greater. The advice of Solomon is, † "not to go forth haſtily to ſtrive, leſt thou know not what to do in the end thereof;" a precept, the great uſe and propriety of which is ſufficiently confirmed by the tragical event of this Day.

† Prov. xxv. 8.

The object of thoſe Patriots, who made the firſt ſtand againſt Arbitrary power, was indeed truly laudable, as it tended only to reduce into due bounds the Prerogative of the Crown, and preſerve the Freedom of the Conſtitution. And could they have ſheathed the ſword, as ſoon as theſe great ends might have been ſecured, ‡ "their bodies would have been buried in peace, and their names lived for evermore. The People would have told of their wiſdom, and the Congregation ſhewn forth their praiſe." But alas! it proved not in their power to ſay, thus far ſhall the war rage, and no farther. As ſoon as the trumpet ſounded to battle, great were the multitudes that aſſembled themſelves together: but though they all fought under the ſame banners, yet their intentions were widely different. The true Patriot ſought only to reduce the power of the Crown; but there were others who meant to annihilate it. The true Patriot

‡ Ecclus xliv. 14, 15.

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wiſhed to reform the eſtabliſhed Church from ſuperſtition and idolatry; but there were others, who deſigned to overturn it, and form another from a model of their own. In ſhort, the true Patriot ſought to preſerve the Conſtitution, while others, on the ſame pretence of liberty, were determined to deſtroy it. And as in civil conteſts the number of real Patriots is generally exceeded by thoſe who are governed by private paſſion or intereſt; the power and authority, the advice and prudence of the firſt Leaders were over-ruled by the violence and clamour of the many. Hence ſucceeded all the horror of the War, all confuſion of Character, no reſpect to Government. The views and demands of thoſe who were engaged, proved ſo various and unbounded, that all avenues to peace were neceſſarily ſhut up, and the end of all was a ſubverſion of the Conſtitution, and perfect Anarchy.

And indeed, could theſe men have foreſeen the calamities, which were the conſequence of the war; could they have foreſeen the deſtruction of the beſt families in the nation, the diſſolution of the Houſe of Lords, and the ſlaughter of their Sovereign; and after all the expence of the peace and blood of their Countrymen, that the people tired out at laſt with the confuſion the Uſurpation had introduced, ſhould give up every privilege to the Crown, which they had thus laboured to preſerve; They would have ſubmitted to Cæſar more than was his due; and their zeal, though in the cauſe of liberty, would have been much more temperate. The ſame love of their Country would have taught them to proceed with temper and caution, and to admit with prudence and circumſpection the counſels of the violent and deſigning; and by theſe means to have retained the power of directing what they had honeſtly begun, and repreſſed the violence of thoſe, who ſought only to deſtroy.

But though the calamities of the war were great, and the bleſſings of liberty not immediately reaped from it; though the Rights and Privileges, for which ſo much blood was ſhed, were by an ill-timed Liberality given up at laſt; yet Providence was pleaſed, even by thoſe events that promiſed no hopes, to prepare the minds of the people for better things, and opened a way to a deliverance great and laſting. For after the nation had felt the wanton abuſe of power under one Prince, and the rigorous exerciſe of it under another; after they had experienced how dangerous an undefined power was to the freedom of the Conſtitution, both in regard to civil and religious Rights; after they ſaw at laſt, that every thing they held dear, as friends to their Country and lovers of true Religion, was uſurped and violated; then was the time fully come, when all thoſe falſe principles of Government, by which the Nation was well nigh brought to deſtruction, were exploded; when all

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the conteſts between Prince and People were ended, by reducing the Royal Prerogative to moderate and leſs uncertain limits; and at laſt our civil and religious Rights were ſecured by eſtabliſhing the Crown in the Houſe of a Proteſtant Family.

These were the bleſſings which Providence wrought out of the evil that befel our Anceſtors: And therefore when we recollect the miſeries of the War, we ought at the ſame time to conſider them as the ſeaſonable viſitations of Heaven, to prepare us for the bleſſings we do now, and have long enjoyed.

In other Nations, the ſtruggles for Liberty have uſually ended in ſlavery; in our own, Providence has watched over us for our good. God has mercifully brought light out of darkneſs, and has afforded us every means of being a free and happy People. We are governed by a Prince, who in

imitation of his royal Anceſtors is a * nurſing Father to his People: And as He with juſtice and equity adminiſters to us every protection, that true Liberty and a Love of our Country can prompt us to deſire; ſo let us, as becomes men who live in the conſtant experience of his Royal favour, make it our chief care never to be wanting in any tribute of Gratitude and Duty to Him, but with hearts full of Loyalty and Affection render unto Cæſar the things which are Cæſar's.

* Iſai. xlix. 23.

FINIS.